

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5631

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3063

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, JM

SUBJECT: STATUS OF OPERATION BUCCANEER

FROM AMBASSADOR FOR ASST SECRETARY SHLAUDERMAN AND
AMBASSADOR VANCE

1. BUCCANEER SITREPS PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE BUT I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FIND IT HELPFUL TO HAVE MY PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF THE OPERATION. FUNDAMENTALLY, I BELIEVE BUCCANEER HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR ACHIEVING MAJOR SUCCESSES IN INTERDICTING THE FLOW OF NARCOTICS FROM AND THROUGH JAMAICA TO THE UNITED STATES, AND ALSO FOR GAINING VALUABLE EXPERIENCE IN MARIJUANA ERADICATION PROGRAMS AND TECHNIQUES. BUCCANEER HAS BEEN SLOW GETTING OFF THE GROUND, BUT A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF WORK HAS BEEN DONE AND I BELIEVE WE HAVE REACHED A TAKEOFF POINT. SOME PROBLEMS REMAIN BUT THE NEXT 30 TO 60 DAYS SHOULD TELL THE TALE. RECENT VISITS BY SHANLEY AND SHANKLE WERE HELPFUL IN CLARIFYING GOALS AND STRAIGHTENING OUT INTERNAL COMMAND PROBLEMS.

2. VIRTUALLY ALL THE NECESSARY AIRCRAFT, EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL ARE NOW IN PLACE AND READY TO GO. THE ARRIVAL OF SALMI, MARQUARDT AND WALKER TO TAKE UP JOBS AS PROJECT MANAGER, COMMAND POST CHIEF, AND AIR OPERATIONS CHIEF, RESPECTIVELY, HAVE ADDED CONSIDERABLE STARCH TO
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THE OPERATION WHICH HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY FAIRLY RELAXED

EXCEPT FOR THE EFFORTS OF SA SEARS WHO DID A FINE JOB IN THE INITIAL PHASE.

3. WHILE U.S. ELEMENTS ARE AT LAST IN PLACE AND READY TO GO, JAMAICAN ELEMENTS, AND PARTICULARLY THE AIR WING, HAVE BEEN WORKING AT THE RAGGED EDGE OF FATIGUE FROM THE LONG STRAIN OF CARRYING OUT ANTI-CRIME AND ANTI-NARCOTIC OPERATIONS WITHOUT OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. A BRIEF STANDDOWN TO REST, REFIT, AND REGROUP HAS BEEN NECESSARY. WE HOPE JAMAICAN UNITS WILL BE BACK ON THE LINE AND READY TO GO BY NEXT WEEK. THE NORMAL SUMMER VACATION PERIOD HAS ALSO DELAYED THE SMOOTH BUILDUP OF BUCCANEER SLIGHTLY. FOR EXAMPLE, BRIGADIER GREEN WHO, AS CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE JDF IS A KEY MAN IN BUCCANEER, HAS BEEN OFF THE ISLAND. HE RETURNS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1. A FINAL FACTOR CAUSING SOME DELAY IS THE PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION IN THE PARISH OF ST. ANN ON SEPTEMBER 3. ST. ANN IS ONE OF THE CHIEF MARIJUANA-GROWING AREAS ON THE ISLAND AND THE GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY DOES NOT WISH TO JEOPARDIZE ITS CHANCES BY ANNOUNCING OR UNDERTAKING A SWEEPING ERADICATION PROGRAM UNTIL THE ELECTION IS OVER. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE A LACK OF RESOLVE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PART, BUT MERELY GOOD POLITICS. BARRING UNEXPECTED EVENTS THE GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE, VIVIAN BLAKE, IS PROBABLY A SHOO-IN.

4. MY RECENT CONTACTS WITH PM MANLEY AND MINISTER MATALON INDICATE THAT THE GOJ REMAINS COMMITTED TO BOTH THE INTERDICTION AND ERADICATION ASPECTS OF BUCCANEER. HOWEVER, IT THINK THEY HAVE TENDED TO UNDERESTIMATE BOTH THE MECHANICAL AND LOGISTICAL DIFFICULTIES OF THESE PROGRAMS, AND THEIR POSSIBLE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. THEY ARE JUST BEGINNING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH BOTH THESE FACTORS. WHILE THEY ARE DOING SOME OVER-DUE THINKING, THUS FAR THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY WILL RECONSIDER THEIR GOALS OR SEEK TO MAKE MAJOR ALTERATIONS IN OPERATION BUCCANEER.

5. I AM SKEPTICAL THAT THE GOJ HAS EITHER THE MATERIAL OR INSTITUTIONAL WHEREWITHAL TO CONDUCT A LONG-TERM ERADICATION PROGRAM OF SUFFICIENT SCOPE TO DESTROY COMMERCIAL MARIJUANA CULTIVATION ON THE ISLAND. SUCH A
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PROGRAM WOULD REQUIRE A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF EFFORT OVER A LONG PERIOD GIVEN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLANT AND OF THE TERRAIN, AND ARE PROBABLY BEYOND JAMAICAN MEANS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT A MAJOR ERADICATION EFFORT WILL NOT BE UNDERTAKEN, NOR THAT SUCH AN EFFORT IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF BUCCANEER. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS BASIC TO THE STRATEGY OF BUCCANEER THAT THE GROWERS AND SMUGGLERS BE STIMULATED TO CARRY OUT THEIR OWN

ERADICATION PROGRAM BY BEING FORCED TO HARVEST THIS YEAR'S CROPS AS EARLY AND QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, THEREBY EXPOSING THEMSELVES TO THE MAXIMUM DEGREE TO THE INTERDICTION, SEARCH, AND SEIZURE ASPECTS OF BUCCANEER. A FAST MOVING, LARGELY AIRBORNE ERADICATION PROGRAM MAKING SOME USE OF WEED KILLERS IS THE BEST MEANS OF FORCING THEM TO DO THIS. HENCE I CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SUCH A PROGRAM SO LONG AS THE GOJ REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED TO IT.

6. AS PREDICTED, INFORMATION ON BUCCANEER IS BEGINNING TO LEAK INTO THE PUBLIC ARENA WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY. IN ADDITION TO THE JACK ANDERSON ARTICLE LAST SUNDAY, U.S. CONGRESSMAN RANGEL CURRENTLY VISITING JAMAICA PROVIDED A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION IN THE COURSE OF A TELEVISED APPEARANCE HERE LAST EVENING, AND ALSO INDICATED HIS OWN RESERVATIONS ABOUT U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAM. WE UNDERSTAND THAT YESTERDAY THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND JUSTICE ELI MATALON GAVE A BACKGROUND BRIEFING TO THE TOP PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA HERE IN JAMAICA ON BUCCANEER AND OTHER NARCOTICS-RELATED ACTIVITIES. WHILE HIS INFORMATION WAS NOT FOR PUBLICATION THE MEDIA ARE NOW IN THE PICTURE AND WE CAN EXPECT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF STORIES ON BUCCANEER BOTH HERE AND IN THE U.S. YOU NOW HAVE OUR DRAFT STATEMENT AND QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON OPERATION BUCCANEER AND I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR APPROVAL OR SUGGESTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I WILL TALK TO MATALON TODAY ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OF MAKING THE STATEMENT PUBLIC NOW IN ORDER TO FORESTALL FURTHER SPECULATION IN THE PRESS. YOUR VIEWS WOULD BE HELPFUL. GERARD

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